MoDOT's **Bolder** Five-Year Direction

A Summary of Outreach Efforts and Feedback Received

June 8, 2011

Outreach Efforts

Efforts to communicate the Bolder Five-Year Direction and seek input on the proposal have been extensive, reaching thousands of Missourians in all areas of the state. Numerous MoDOT employees, including top management, district engineers, community relations managers and others in outreach positions, worked diligently to explain the plan, answer questions and collect comments and suggestions. Members of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission were also active in this effort. The public dialogue across the state ranged from personal contacts to community briefings and everything in between. Here is a breakdown of the variety of ways MoDOT and the commission provided information about and accepted feedback on the plan (numbers are through the end of the public comment period – June 3).

Personal Contacts	413
Director and Commissioner Visits	11 – Joplin (2), Macon (3), Willow Springs (2), Lexington, St. James, Hannibal, Kirksville
Community Briefings May 9 – June 2	115
Attendance at Community Briefings	2,348
Online Community Briefing Visits	6,745
Telephone, Website, E-mail and Mail Contacts	407
Newspaper Articles	310
Editorials	15
Television News Stories	57
Facebook Mentions	74
Tweets	330

What MoDOT and the Commission Heard

The majority of comments and feedback fall into the following broad categories:

1. Don't close my building.
2. You're doing the right thing.
3. Service will suffer.
4. You'll be more efficient.
5. Go slow.
6. Go fast.
7. Avoid layoffs.
8. Get smaller.

Most Frequent External Comments

- **District Consolidation**
  By far, the majority of concerns and comments focused on the proposal to close the district offices in Macon, Joplin and Willow Springs. In conjunction, a great deal of feedback was

received from individuals and organizations in support of keeping the district office in Hannibal. Some commented that District 5 should be closed or consolidated with Central Office. Others recommended having eight districts, keeping three in the south. Another option set forth was to have only one district cover the northern part of the state and have three districts in the southern part of the state.

- **Facilities**
  After district consolidation, the most common feedback received was on the proposed closing of maintenance and traffic facilities. The following facilities received the most support for being kept open: St. James, Moody, Puxico, Elsinore, Luray, Louisiana, Meta, Herculaneum, Festus, Elsinore, Nashua, New Cambria, Northmoor, Seymour, Eagleville and Urich.

- **Jobs/Economic Impact**
  The discussion on closing the 135 facilities focused largely on the loss of jobs and the negative impact on the communities' economic health and welfare.

- **Service**
  Following jobs and community impact, service was the biggest concern on the minds of Missourians in areas with a proposed district office or facility closing. Many people expressed concern that roads would not be cleared as quickly in ice and snow and other emergency situations. Others noted that there would be more travel time required of maintenance crews resulting in inefficiencies and overtime expenses.

- **Rural vs. Urban**
  A number of comments suggested that the Bolder Five-Year Direction would have a more negative impact on rural communities than urban areas.

- **Timing**
  One of the most frequent recommendations was to take more time to review the plan prior to acting on it. Comments to this effect were received from Missouri legislators, the Missouri Farm Bureau, the Missouri Municipal League, other organizations and individuals throughout the state. Also related to timing were comments stating this action was being taken at a very bad time, when unemployment is already high and the economy is still sluggish.

- **Smaller Government**
  There was a good deal of support for MoDOT's plan to become a smaller agency. Many expressed appreciation that the department was taking this bold action and tightening its belt like everyone else has had to do. These comments acknowledged the difficulty of the

decision to reduce the size of the MoDOT workforce, close facilities and sell equipment, but recognized it was the right thing to do in light of the funding situation.

- **District Boundaries**
  MoDOT received some very specific recommendations on changing the district boundaries, including aligning them along the lines of the Highway Patrol, Conservation or the Emergency Response Regions. Comments ranged from moving Howell and Texas counties within the Southwest District boundaries rather than the Southeast District boundaries and keeping Lincoln County in the Northeast District rather than move it to the St. Louis District. Another suggestion was to include Montgomery County in the St. Louis District along with the other two counties overseen by the Boonslick Regional Planning Commission - Lincoln and Warren.

- **Funding**
  Suggestions for increasing funding included implementing a one-cent sales tax and increasing the fuel tax. Some people wondered why when MoDOT knew such a severe drop in funding was coming that the department didn't take action sooner and avoid having to make such drastic cuts. Several comments noted the need to educate people about MoDOT's work, services and accomplishments so they would support additional funding for transportation.

Most Frequent Internal Comments

- **Avoid Layoffs**
  This was the biggest concern among MoDOT employees. The most frequent solution offered was to extend the plan's implementation timeline and allow more time for attrition and transfers to reduce the size of the workforce.

- **Facility Closings**
  The proposal to close 135 facilities, including the three district offices, prompted a great many employee comments. Many were afraid of losing their jobs and the impact that would have on them and their families. They were also concerned they would be spread too thin and unable to provide quality service. They also voiced worries about increased travel time to and from their jobs and the potential for additional fuel and overtime expenses.

- **Timing**
  One of the most frequent recommendations from employees was to move quickly with implementing the Bolder Five-Year Direction. They are eager to have a final plan of action, know what will happen to them and their jobs and move forward.

- **Furloughs**
  Another common comment was to implement employee furloughs to deal with the funding situation rather than to eliminate staff, buildings and equipment.

- **Outsourcing**
  Many comments received were in opposition to the proposal to outsource certain functions. Most of those commenting believed using consultants would not be as cost-effective as using internal staff, nor as efficient.

- **Employee Benefits**
  There were a number of solutions offered in the area of employee benefits. Examples include reducing sick and annual leave benefits, offering a retirement incentive, making eligible employees retire, eliminating the back drop, cutting salaries, raising insurance premiums and having employees pay more for benefits

- **Employee Performance**
  Many employees commented that reducing the size of the MoDOT staff should focus on releasing poor performers and keeping good performers. They believed employee performance should be the key criteria when competing for remaining jobs and employees should be given a chance to state their qualifications and abilities when competing for jobs.

- **Innovative Solutions**
  In addition to employee concerns, many staff members came up with ideas and suggestions to trim costs and make the department more efficient. Examples ran the gamut from cutting travel, lodging and meal reimbursements to closing rest areas to installing programmable and lockable thermostats in all MoDOT facilities. They are to be commended for reacting positively, thinking innovatively and being part of the solution.